Operation of services to gulf region

1363. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether any State Government has proposed to float an airline to operate flights to Gulf region during the year 2005;

(b) if so, the present status and the exemption to rules asked and granted if any;

(c) the steps taken in details to ensure that the travellers to the Gulf region do not face any problem in regard to the availability of seats; and

(d) the details of requests received from various sources for operating to the Gulf region and the decision taken in each case along with reasons for such decision, for the last three years, year-wise and category-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) The State Government of Kerala proposes to set up an airline to operate flights to Gulf Region.

(b) According to the Government regulations airlines must have a fleet of 20 aircraft and a minimum 5 years continuous flying experience in domestic sector before seeking overseas flight rights. Moreover the Government has also reserved the Gulf route for Air India and Indian Airlines for 3 years. As such, clearance has not been given to the State Government proposal.

(c) At present, the Gulf region is well connected by foreign as well as national carriers. 8 foreign carriers *viz*. Air Arabia, Emirates, Etihad Airways, Gulf Air, Kuwait Airways, Oman Air and Qatar Airways are providing 218 services per week and our national carriers *viz*. Air India and Indian Airlines are providing 162 services/week to Gulf region.

(d) While requests are received from different sources from time to time like foreign Governments, airlines, State Governments etc., traffic

rights for operation of international air services are specified in our bilateral Air Services Agreements concluded with various countries. These agreements are reviewed from time to time as part of an on-going process, depending on traffic demand, balance of benefit to our carriers, overall interest to national economy and diplomatic/political considerations. Based on this, traffic rights have been enhanced in Gulf region during the bilateral air services consultations with Gulf Air owner States (UAE/Bahrain/Oman), UAE (Dubai), Qatar and Oman during the last 3 years.

Air-connectivity in North-Eastern Region

1364. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the status of air-connectivity in the North-Eastern Region;

(b) the number of flights among the North-Eastern States including the Kolkata airport;

(c) the number of these flights operated by Indian Airlines and by other organizations indicating the detailed break of flights, air-connectivity in this region; and

(d) whether Government propose to increase the air-connectivity in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) Airline-wise details of current air services in the North East Region is given in the Statement (*See* below).

(d) Government has laid down route dispersal guidelines with a view to achieve better regulation of air transport services taking into account the need for air transport services in different regions of the country including North East Region. It is, however, upto the airlines to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability. As such, the airlines are free to operate anywhere in the country subject to compliance of route dispersal guidelines issued by Government.